LEVEL ONE

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SOME LITURGICAL CONSIDERATIONS
III.

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THE HOLY LITURGY — II.

It is well known that the general posture in the early church was for all to stand throughout the Holy Liturgy as is still done in the Eastern Church. It is fitting in our Liturgy for the assistant ministers at the altar and the servers in the sanctuary to stand as the celebrant does throughout the service, (excepting at the Epistle when all but the reader should sit, including the celebrant, and during the General Confession, Absolution Comfortable Words, the Communion time and at the final Blessing).

Coming to the second division of the Holy Liturgy we have already mentioned the Offertory Sentences and Proper Offertoriums, but the Offertory itself needs far more consideration than it generally receives.

The Offertory is an outstanding portion of the Holy Eucharist. It strictly marked the beginning of the Liturgy of the Faithful and expressed important aspects of the church's belief and action. It was preeminently the offering of bread and wine to God for His use and blessing for the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Communion in Christ's Body and Blood. Each communicant brought a portion to offer signifying the belief that the earth is the Lord's and all it brings forth; that mankind owes all to Him; and that the bread and wine so offered are symbolic of bringing all the fruits of creation to Him for His blessing. Man thus shared with God the fruits He enabled him to produce. Moreover a part of the offering was given to the poor and needy with other oblations for that purpose. In the Eastern Church the elements of bread and wine are still brought to the altar in an elaborate ceremonial procession called the Great Entrance.

We no longer bring the fruits of the earth except perhaps on Thanksgiving Day, but instead our alms and other offerings of money for the support of God's worship and the spread of His Kingdom, and we do offer bread and wine provided through the money gifts of the people. The offering of bread and wine however is hardly noticeable to most congregations. In some places even no Offertory Sentence is read by the celebrant unless there is to be an offering of money. One or more of the sentences should always be read, and then according to the rubric the alms and other offerings are to be received in a decent basin and reverently brought to the priest who humbly is to present it and place it upon the Holy Table, "and the Priest shall THEN offer and place upon the Holy Table the Bread and Wine." Some of the clergy place them on the altar while the collection is proceeding and the congregation knows nothing about it. Frequently people as soon as they have placed their money in the offering plate kneel down (especially at early Eucharists) presumably to pray as, if neither the offering of the alms nor of the oblations of bread and wine are any concern of theirs. All should stand until the alms and then the bread and wine have been offered on the Holy Table.

There is considerable ceremony in some places over the presentation of the alms. A procession of wardens and vestrymen, or ushers, bring them marching up the nave in step, then solemnly stand at the entrance to the choir or even at the altar rail while the offering of money is presented and offered by the priest. This is sometimes ridiculed as making too much ado over money and the alms basin. However, it is all to the good if it is not done too ostentatiously but reverently, and especially if the priest does not elevate the alms basin too high, but humbly presents it as the rubric says. It expresses the importance of the offerings made to God by the congregation represented by the chosen men of the parish.

But it is all to the bad if some corresponding dignity and solemnity are not evident in the offering of the oblations of bread and wne. These also are the gift and offering of the people, and not only in themselves, but even more in the significance they bear, symbolizing the offering of man's labor and of the offerers themselves to God for His use, ever to be made more completely one in the mystical Body of Christ, as the elements of bread and wine are to be made His sacramental Body and Blood. Each member of the congregation should feel that he himself is being offered on God's altar represented by the alms and oblations.

The Liturgical movement both in the Roman and the Anglican Communion has made some progress in not only emphasizing the meaning of the Offertory but also in restoring its outward expression. In some places the people themselves bring to the sacred ministers bread and wine; in others representatives of the people bring them from a table prepared at the entrance of the church to the deacon or priest at the altar, and in still other places they are brought in procession from a chapel or side altar where they have been prepared in the sacred vessels before the beginning of the service. The crucifer leads followed by the taperers if any, then by the head server who carries the sacred vessels containing the bread and wine, to the celebrant or to the deacon of the Liturgy who in turn hands them to the celebrant, who offers them on the Holy Table.

At so-called low celebrations of the Holy Communion it is at least possible to prepare the elements in the sacred vessels before the beginning of the Liturgy, at the credence table, then after the presentation of the alms, have the bread and wine brought to the celebrant by a deacon or other server. This also may be done at any celebration of the Holy Communion if there is no chapel or side altar at which to prepare the elements, or if the Offertory Procession is considered too much ceremony. The preparation of the elements before the service begins saves time in the service itself especially at low celebrations.

It would emphasize the significance of the Offertory if a special Prayer of Offering was provided to be said as soon as the alms and oblations have been offered the people still standing. Then the words of offering asking God to accept the alms and oblation could be eliminated from the Prayer for the Church, and after the lavabo, the biddings of special intercessions for which the new rubric of 1928 provides, would lead directly to that Prayer giving it greater reality as the Great Intercession thus unimpeded by any reference to the offerings at its opening.

It is greatly to be hoped that in a future revision there may be inserted in the Prayer for the Church a thanksgiving in commemoration of the saints, before the intercession for the faithful departed.

Between the Great Intercession and the Anaphora there comes an interlude in our Liturgy during which the Invitation, Confession, Absolution and Comfortable Words are said. In the First Prayer Book of Edward VI Cranmer logically placed the whole of this preparation of the communicants immediately preceding the Communion of Priest and People. Ever since the Invitation, Confession

Absolution and Comfortable Words were placed in the Second English Prayer Book before the Sursum Corda, and the Prayer of Humble Access between the Sanctus and the Prayer of Consecration, they have presented a problem. In the last American Revision we solved it in part by restoring the Prayer of Humble Access to its original place just before the act of Communion, so that the Sanctus now leads up as it should to the Prayer of Consecration. The question still remains whether the other four items are in the best place, and if so whether they might not profitably be shortened. They undoubtedly break in on the mounting movement of sacrificial action which begins with the minor oblation at the Offertory, followed by the Great Intercession gathering in the whole mystical Body of Christ, which then without any interruption should reach its climax with the Anaphora introduced by Sursum Corda, the offerers lifting up their hearts to the celestial realms to thank God and magnify His glorious Name with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven. Then in the major Oblation of the Prayer of Consecration they join with the Great High Priest risen and ascended, to plead His completed Sacrifice before the Father, and offer themselves in union with Him and His Sacrifice.

We should hardly want to put back to its original place the penitential preparation of the communicants where it would overweight the service with a rather heavy anti-climax after the Prayer of Consecration and the Lord's Prayer. The Prayer of Humble Access makes just the right transition to the Act of Communion both from a devotional and an artistic point of view.

The suggestion of some that the General Confession and Absolution might be placed after the Summary of the Law and Kyries is worth of consideration. It seems a logical place for confession after examination of conscience concerning the divine precepts.

If the Comfortable Words are retained it seems also that their welcome of sinners and the heavy laden to the Saviour would come more appropriately before the Confession and Absolution than after. In any case whereever they are placed or allowed to remain, their use should be made permissive and not obligatory, as should the use of the Creed and Gloria in Excelsis, except on Great Festivals, Sundays and other feast days. This would allow the shortening of the Liturgy on ordinary week days when it is often desirable.

Again there is the suggestion of placing a penitential preparation for priest and people, such as the Sarum Rite had for the celebrant and his assistants, before the opening of the Liturgy proper. In some places this is now said before the altar by the priests and his assistants, but in addition to being unauthorized, it is quite out of place inasmuch as in our rite confession and absolution are provided for later in the Liturgy itself.

To come back to the opening of the Anaphora, an ancient custom, the disuse of which is much to be regretted, and its restoration to be highly recommended, is for all to stand at "Lift up your hearts." It helps to mark the beginning of the most solemn and exalted portion of the Liturgy. It is also not only emininetly appropriate from a devotional point of view for the people to lift up their bodies as well as their hearts for the great act of praise and thanksgiving here introduced, but of practical value as being a restful change of posture for choir and congregation who otherwise would be kneeling from the Prayer for the Church through the Invitation, Confession Absolution and Comfortable Words as now appointed, the Sursum Corda, Preface, Prayer of Consecration, Lord's Prayer, Prayer of Humble Access, Agnus Dei or other Hymn, until going forward to receive Communion.

It is an inspiring experience to see a congregation rise as the prist sings or says, "Lift up your hearts," and then at the words, "Holy, Holy, Holy," of the Sanctus bow their heads and bodies in lovely reverence and adoration, and then kneel for the Prayer of Consecration.

The Editor of the News Sheet reports that he has on hand the following leaflets:

ENGLISH PUBLICATIONS—

The English Catholic (many odd numbers of the Society Gazette).

English Catholicism by C. B. Moss (many copies).

The English Use: It's Relation to the Roman Outlook Today (reprinted article from the Guardian) (several copies).

Anglo-Catholicism at the Cross Roads (a few copies).

PUBLICATIONS BY THE AMERICAN SOCIETY—

Suggestions for Servers by F. F. E. Blake (many copies).

Synopsis of the Ceremonies of a Plain Celebration, by F. F. E. Blake (a good many copies).

A Letter by C. E. Hill (several copies).

Why Not Try the Prayer Book Use? by F. F. E. Blake (many copies).

Why Belong to the Anglican Society? by Canon Daniels (many copies).

An Invitation to Become a Member of the Anglican Society (many copies).

Continuity in the Anglican Communion, by Canon Daniels. (many copies.)

Notes on Chanting, by Canon Daniels (many copies).

CHRISTIAN REUNION

A letter to the Guardian from the Bishop of Gloucester which has bearing on our proposed union with Presbyterians.

Sir—The Rev. K. L. Parry, the chairman of the Congregational Church, is reported to have said:

I sometimes think that if the Free Churches could discover what holds them apart, and the Anglican Church could discover what holds it together, we might find the secret of reunion.

The Anglican Church is held together: (1) Because it bases its teaching on the Bible as containing all things necessary for salvation; (2) because it accepts as the basis of its doctrinal teaching the Catholic faith as taught in the one creed which has any real claim to be Catholic; (3) because we accept and hold tenaciously the historical Church Order. We do not do this because of either "constitutional rigidity or spiritual arrogance," but because we know that it is a firm basis for union, and because we believe that the chief cause of the disunion of Free Churchmen is the absence of a sound Church Order; (4) because we accept the Sacraments and Ordinances of the Church, baptisms, confirmations, Holy Communion, ordinations, penance, or discipline, marriage, and sacramental visitation of the sick; (5) because we have the vision of the one Catholic Church, that is, the one universal Church throughout the world, and therefore believe that all divisions and schisms are wrong, that it is our duty not to make divisions, and to do all we can to heal them.

Within this Church Order there is room for much variety of worship There might certainly be room for the Free Church type of worship. The Wesleyans or the Congregationalists might be evangelical or missionary societies within the Church. We cannot give up our insistence on the historical Church Order, because we believe that it is now, as it always has been, the sure basis of unity. In the united Church the church orders must be such that there can be no reasonable doubt cast on their validity, but there needs must be some interim period during which two Churches when they unite ma ygrow together, and I believe (as has been shown in the case of South India), we might agree on a basis for the process of uniting which "in humility and charity would open the doors to all who have seen the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

A. C. GLOUCESTR: